

# **TAKE THE CHALLENGE - BECOME A (BETTER) FACILITATOR**



**A short guidebook with examples on  
different elements that make a good  
facilitator**


**Avtor:**

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The project Take the challenge – become a (better) facilitator was financed by the European Union, under the reference number 2018-2-SIO2-KA105–014702. The authorship attribution of this booklet goes to the author as the result of her standpoint and practice. The European Commission is not responsible for use of the information, quoted in this booklet. Methods, used in this booklet are well known methods of non-formal education and therefore used by other authors as well.

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**Ljubljana, 2019**





## Acknowledgment

Many thanks to most amazing and supportive trainers Beatrice Poti and Giorgio Agostinelli, who also provided some of practical examples and the general idea of the structure of the training course Take the challenge - become a (better) facilitator, included also in this book. I would also like to thank Nives Felić for all her kind support, help and positivity. Finally, the project would not be possible without eleven participants, beautiful souls, who made this experience simply unforgettable.



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## INTRODUCTION

Dear reader, youth worker, facilitator, volunteer, trainer candidate!

This booklet is a result of the project Take the challenge - become a (better) facilitator that took place in a form of a training course (mobility of youth workers) in Slovenia in November 2018. It gathered young people from four countries, which were at the time mostly newcomers in the youth sector and did not quite have the experiences with facilitation of the activities of non-formal education within culturally diverse groups, or those experiences were limited. Some of the participants rather had a lot of experiences with working with youngster but in different fields, so the transfer of good practices and knowledge-sharing was enabled.

The booklet serves as guidelines for working with youth in a non-formal education. Its' aim is to give the tools to newcomers in the field of youth work (i.e. new youth workers), but it can also be used as a framework idea for other mobility of youth workers. The activities, offered in this guidebook can be used in different formats, but are especially suitable for facilitation of youth exchanges or any other setting, where young people from different backgrounds are set together.

The structure of the booklet is divided into 5 compounds - each of them is focused on different elements that make a good (or better) facilitator. Under each compound you can find practical examples which can be used with group of young people as an activity or practical workshop. All examples serve to being used in a group work, not as individual preparation of the facilitator.

There is also place for your own notes, observations and thoughts which will guide you through the process of facilitation. That way, you can follow-up not only your personal learning outcome, but also the improvement of the group.

The theoretical (didactical) parts of the booklet are subject to quotation of secondary sources, listed at the end of the booklet.

We hope that this guidebook can offer a good start for you to become...

... a (better) facilitator in all terms; being helpful, confident, caring and always devoted to the youth work.

Good luck!

# 1. FACILITATOR AS A LEARNER

## 1.1 WHO IS A FACILITATOR AND WHAT DOES HE/ SHE DO?

Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines a word ‘facilitator’ as follows:

*‘someone who helps a person or organization do something more easily or find the answer to a problem, by discussing things and suggesting ways of doing things’.*

Therefore in the sense of a youth work, a facilitator supports group, acts as mediator, serves as collaborator and mostly encourages young people to bring out the best of them. In a non-formal setting, he/ she tries to facilitate **the learning process and guide to its best outcome**. That is why it is so important for him/ her to know the background of the youngsters included in the group (hereinafter referred as ‘the participants’). A good facilitator will always keep relations within the group on a horizontal level. The assumption that one cannot become a facilitator if he/ she is not eager to continually learn and perceive himself/ herself as a learner.

Keep in mind:

- o Facilitator uses different methods, applied to the interests/ abilities of the participants, environment and time given
- o Facilitator is innovative
- o Facilitator is one of the group
- o Be aware of differences among three types of learning (formal, non-formal, informal)

## 1.2 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 1 - LEARNING RIVER

Instructions for this activity are given in two steps, a) and b) (Pascat and others 2017).

a) REFLECTION OF ONE’S OWN LEARNING (20 minutes):

Each participant is given a A4 paper and a pen. They draw a river as a metaphor of their life. They have 20 minutes to think about everything that they have learned since their childhood until today. They are asked to answer the following questions and write them down on their river:

- Which were the most important things you learnt in your life?
- What did you learn?
- Thanks to whom or what?

Participants can also write down obstacles they faced during learning. At the end they make a graphic ‘cake’ divided into sections of formal, non-formal and informal learning according to the percentage of the main learnings they had. If the participants are not clear about what the differences between those three types are, you can explain with practical examples from life.

b) WALK AND TALK (15 minutes):

Participants get together in groups of three and share among them the reflections on Learning River. Three questions that can serve as guidance are:

- What supported your learning process?
  - What blocked learning?
  - Who was a particular person and his/her style that influenced your learning outcomes?
- Sharing thoughts is the most important aspect of this activity. It helps with realizing that most par-

Keep in mind:

- o As a facilitator, you never force a participant to share their ideas if they do not feel like it. Creating a safe space which enables the learning process is one of the most important things.

ticipants probably share a fair degree of same experiences with learning. In this manner, participants start to feel more safe and equal.

### 1.3 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 2 - COMPETENCES GAME

Through the learning river, participants will be aware of their competences and skills, so the passion game can later be applied as a team building activity.

The Competences Game is a variation of the activity call 'Passion Game' (40 minutes). The participants are divided in groups of three people; each person decides what is the main competence that defines him/herself. The aim of the game is that the other groups need to guess which competence is connected to which person of the group. The trick is that before the guessing, the participants have the possibility to exchange the competences or not, inside the same group.

This game helps to bond the whole group, the get to know each other through a funny experience that brings together fun and learning. It also makes participants more aware of the fact that looks can be deceiving.

Keep in mind:

- o Laughter is a stress reliever
- o Music played in the background can make the atmosphere more pleasant
- o Use a short energizer before an activity, especially if you notice that participants are tired
- o If activities are lasting for a longer period, try to change the environment, use different places, combine indoor and outdoor activities

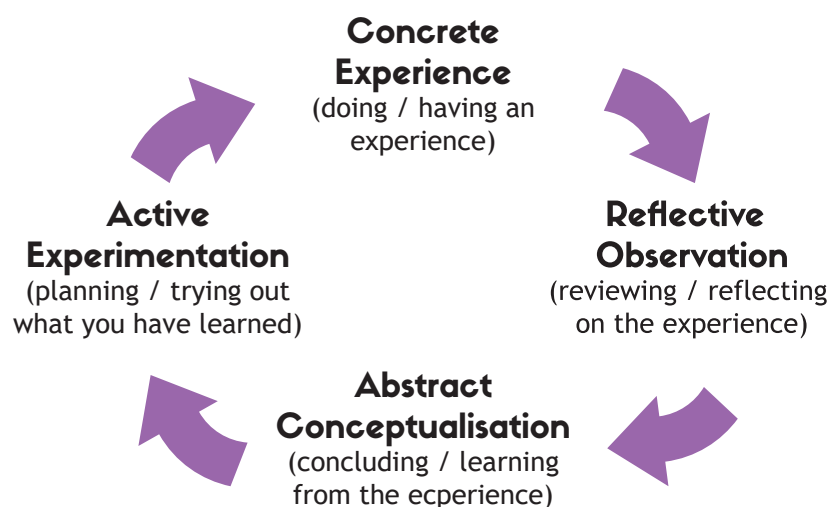
### 1.4 KOLB'S THEORY

*'David A. Kolb's model is based on his experiential learning model, as explained in his book **Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development** (1984). Kolb's model outlines two related approaches toward grasping experience (Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualization), as well as two related approaches toward transforming experience (Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation). According to Kolb's model, the ideal learning process engages all four of these modes in response to situational demands; they form a learning cycle from experience to observation to conceptualization to experimentation and back to experience. In order for learning to be effective, Kolb postulated, all four of these approaches must be incorporated. As individuals attempt to use all four approaches, they may tend to develop strengths in one experience-grasping approach and one experience-transforming approach, leading them to prefer one of the following four learning styles' (Pascat and others 2017, 6):*

1. Accommodator
2. Converger
3. Diverger
4. Assimilator



Accommodators use concrete experience and active experimentation. They are good at actively/practical engaging with the world and actually doing things instead of merely reading about and studying them. Typical accommodators are for example physical therapists. Convergers are characterized by abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. They are good at making practical applications of ideas and using deductive reasoning to solve problems. Typical convergers are for example engineers. Divergers tend toward concrete experience and reflective observation. They are imaginative and are good at coming up with ideas and seeing things from different perspectives. Typical divergers are for example social workers. Assimilators are characterized by abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. They are capable of creating theoretical models by means of inductive reasoning. Typical assimilators are for example philosophers. Of course these described types are just ideal types. That means that in reality people are not only accommodators/ divergers/ assimilators/ convergers but are mixed types (Marn 2018).



## 1.5 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 3 – WORLD CAFE

To discover what kind of learning types are people in a group, we suggest making a ‘World Café’ activity. ‘World Café’ is in general very practical and popular methodology to approach different aspects on any kind of topic.

## 1.6 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 4 – QUESTION ON LEARNING: YES OR NO?

This activity can be done outside or in a big room (30 minutes). Facilitator reads statements and participants take their place according to their thoughts and beliefs on education and learning. They can either go to one side of the room (which means yes), or go to the opposite side (which means no). They are asked to exchange thoughts with the group of people standing on the opposite side. After argumentation, they are allowed to change their mind and stand on the other side.

Examples for questions (but can be adjusted to any other topic):

- Adults are always motivated to learn if the environment is supportive enough.
- If there is no visible change in behaviour, you cannot say that learning really took place.
- It is more effective to learn from failure than to learn from success.

- Most of the time, learning is an unconscious process.
- There is no learning without reflection.
- To become a truly self-directed learner, it is more important to be able to plan your learning than to be open to improvisation (Pascat and others, 2017).

The aim of the activity is to exchange the argumentation and realize that as participants come from different backgrounds, cultures, etc. they might have completely different points of view. The role of the facilitator here is to encourage an organized debating, based on arguments.

**Place for your own notes on chapter 1. Facilitator as a learner:**

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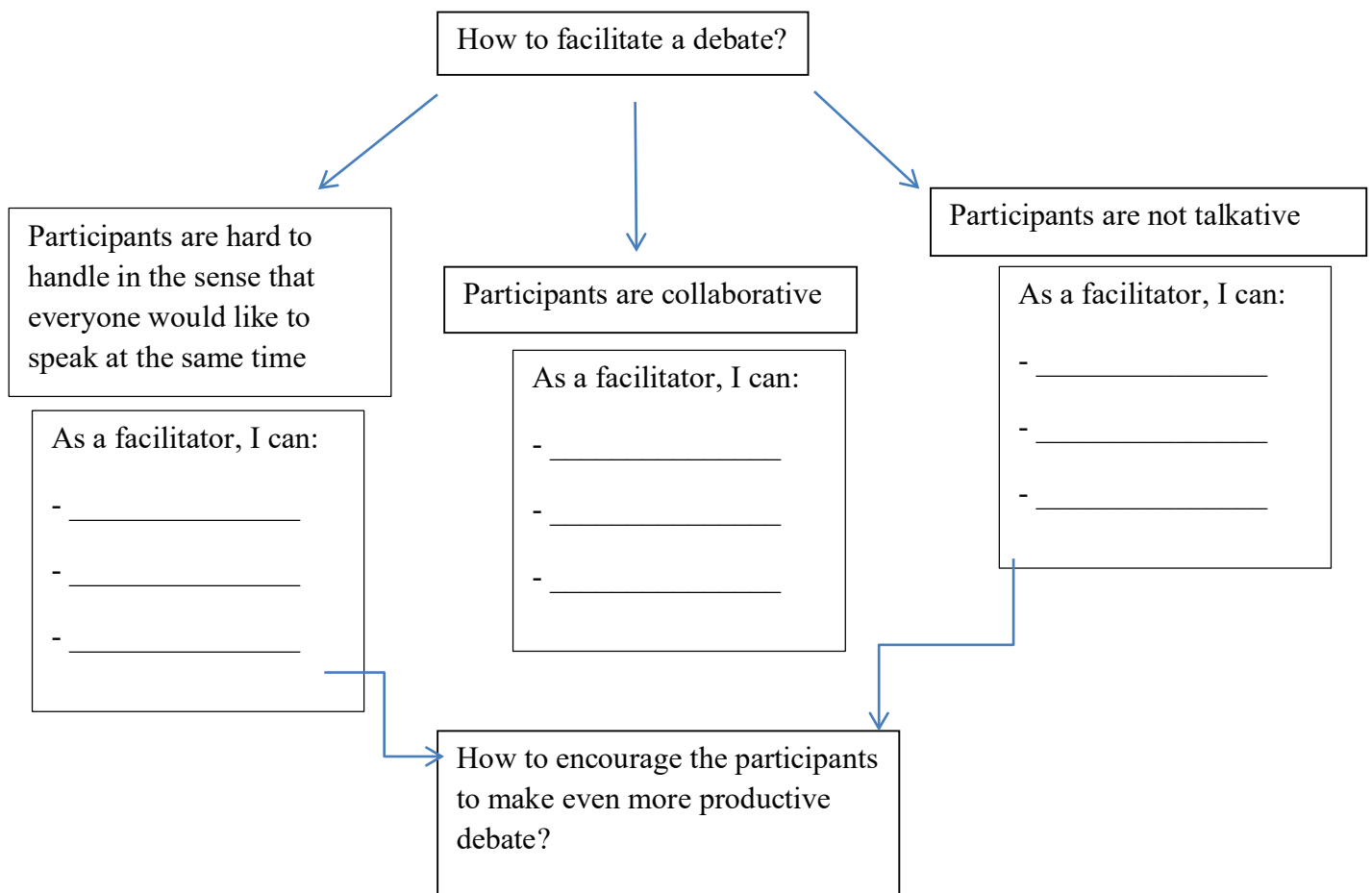
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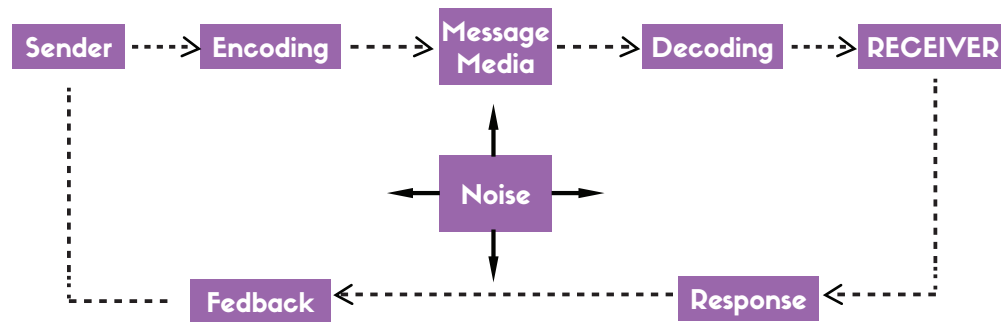
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**Think how you would handle following situation in different scenarios:**



## 2. FACILITATOR AS A COMMUNICATOR

Communication is one of the key elements in facilitation (however that does not also necessarily means understanding). We know many forms of communication which can in general be divided to verbal and non-verbal communication. Each of those forms has their own system of sending a message. The communication normally works as message being sent by sender to the receiver via some sort of medium. There is always specific context when the message is sent and the communication takes place via transmitting the message and understanding of meaning of this message



### 2.1 PUBLIC SPEAKING

When we hear word ‘public speaking’, most people get scared. Why so? What do we fear? In fact, public speaking is connected to what we do every day. We are publicly performing every day when talking to friends, walking down the streets etc. It doesn’t necessarily have to be in a form of holding presentation in front of a group of people.

Anyhow, we have good news for you - fear of public speaking can be overcome! But as any other thing, it takes practice. Because a facilitator in many ways is ‘the exposed one’ in the group, he/she needs to feel to a higher extent comfortable with speaking in front of a group.

**Key elements related to public speaking (Pascat and others, 2017):**

**EYE CONTACT**

**GESTURES** (body language)

**USE OF ROOM AND SPACES** (body movements)

**VOICE**

**FILLERS** (words, sounds, phrases or gestures to fill in the time during a break)

**STRUCTURE** (intro, opening, golden circle, development, wrap up, closure)

### 2.2 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 5 – IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE

Theatre is a perfect method to train your techniques of public speaking. On one hand, it allows you to express your mind and body, on other hand it is very suitable for building up a group trust. The range of the activities you can do in a form of theatre is never-ending.

A very funny activity is for participants to sit and form audience (10 minutes). One participant goes to the front and his/ her task is to sell a specific product. The facilitator chooses this product - the more bizarre it is, the better it can get (for example a rock or objects that have no function or people do not even know what they are). Participant has 1 minute to try to sell the object to the audience which then decide whether they are going to buy it or not. However, be cautious with this activity as maybe some are more shy than the other. Try to encourage everyone equally and make them understand that the decision ‘to buy or not to buy’ is not a competition.

### 2.3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

When working with culturally diverse groups, one can always notice cultural differences. How we perceive different cultures is mostly a subject to what we feel as right or wrong or even what feel ‘normal’ and what does not. But somehow we always make assumptions from our own personal standpoint and what do we see as ‘normal’. That is why it is so important to train our cultural awareness: it makes us reflect on our own reactions and emotions toward others. Being aware of different cultural backgrounds and have a respect for each other is a key to a safe environment.

But before we enter in contact with other cultures it is foremost important to give yourself opportunity to become more aware of yourself and of the aspects in our lives that we may be currently taking for granted (also known as Know Thyself). To understand oneself is to understand other humans as well. Therefore it is very welcoming if you take any Behavioral Self-Assessment test, which can be easily found on the web. A very helpful task is also to write your autobiography in your native language where you describe your life from birth to only 8th birthday. Write 10 pages and try to include as much information as possible (city, state, country at that time, political system, surroundings where you grew up, the food, environmental climate, family environment, relations etc.) Try to talk to your parents or grandparents if you do not remember a lot of things.

Also to successfully identify commonalities and to avoid intercultural misunderstanding you can try out the Lewis Model of Culture. It is a world-wide recognized practice-based approach, established in 1988, which divides cultures into three groups, regarding their cultural conditioning. These three types are a) linear-active, b) multi-active and c) reactive (Crossculture).

### 2.4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE 6 – CULTURAL SIMULATION: ALBATROS

The well-known Albatros experiment (cca 90 minutes) aims at bringing the participants into a situation in which they are confronted with behaviour of culture, new to them. It serves to bring out the fact that many things are interpreted wrongly at first sight, and points out once more the complexity of culture. You can find the instructions for the Albatros experiment very easily on the internet or platforms with tools for non-formal education, such as Salto Youth.

Keep in mind:  
o As a facilitator, participants can ask you to answer all their questions. We suggest you that instead of doing that, you make the group find the answers themselves

**Place for your own notes on chapter 2. Facilitator as a communicator:**

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### 3. FACILITATOR AS A MANAGER

#### 3.1 TIME MANAGEMENT

See, time is relative to our own perception. Some people might even argue that time management exists and instead they talk about personal management. But the fact is that with the regard of how we count the time, everyone has the same 24 hours in a day. In this regard, time is not flexible or changeable. But what we can do, is managing our tasks, priorities and plan them well in order not to waste the time.

There are many ways on organizing our day or our activities, and the simplest one is for sure creating a basic timetable. For facilitation, we are encouraging you to use the following template, which gives you enough space for effective planning of your workshops;

Type of activity	Time estimated	Instructions	Materials needed	Facilitator	Notes

#### 3.2 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE – TIME MANAGEMENT WINDOW

This exercise can be divided in two parts, both related to time.

First part:

Ask participants to stand up, close their eyes and try to count 60 seconds in silence. When participants think 60 seconds have passed, they should sit down. Then they open their eyes and remain in silence.

As a facilitator, you tell who sat down first, who last, and who sat down at exactly 60th second. Then follows the reflection on one's perception of time.

Second part:

Participants are given a framework of 7-days youth exchange timetable and a topic. They start working in groups of 3 - their task is to organize activities in a certain order that makes sense for them and decide how much time is given to each activity. When they all agree on a schedule created, they join with another group, so now there are 6 people in the group. They try to find a compromise on order of activities and time given to those. At the end, all groups come together and must form 1 common timetable.

With this activities we can observe, how differently we sense the time, regarding our own experiences.

#### 3.3 GROUP MANAGEMENT

What to do if the group is not cooperative?  
What to do if there is a bad energy during the workshops? What to do if there are conflicts within the group?

To address this kind of questions, we must

Keep in mind:

- o For a good group dynamics try to combine the setting of the activities - make the participants work in pairs, groups of 3, 4, 5 etc.
- o When dividing the participants

first take a look on how the group is formed. You can't expect a new team to perform well when it first comes together. Forming a team takes time, and members often go through recognizable stages as they change from being a collection of strangers to a united group with common goals (Pasat and others 2017).

Probably one of the most common known theories of group forming is one of the Bruce Tuckman from year 1965. His theory is applicable for stages of small groups and it includes 4 stages. All stages are inevitable and need for final forming of the group. For the facilitator or any other person who is in charge of the group it is very important to be familiar with those stages. Once you know the stages, you can namely help the group to become more effective (Marn 2017, 15-17).

**1. Stage = forming**

In this stage, most team members are positive and polite. Some are anxious, as they haven't fully understood what work the team will do. Others are simply excited about the task ahead. As leader, you play a dominant role at this stage, because team members' roles and responsibilities aren't clear.

This stage can last for some time, as people start to work together, and as they make an effort to get to know their new colleagues.

**2. Stage = storming**

Next, the team moves into the storming phase, where people start to push against the boundaries established in the forming stage. This is the stage where many teams fail.

Storming often starts where there is a conflict between team members' natural working styles. People may work in different ways for all sorts of reasons but, if differing working styles cause unforeseen problems, they may become frustrated.

Storming can also happen in other situations. For example, team members may challenge your authority, or jockey for position as their roles are clarified. Or, if you haven't defined clearly how the team will work, people may feel overwhelmed by their workload, or they could be uncomfortable with the approach you're using.

**3. Stage= norming**

Gradually, the team moves into the norming stage. This is when people start to resolve their differences, appreciate colleagues' strengths, and respect your authority as a leader.

Now that your team members know one another better, they may socialize together, and they are able to ask one another for help and provide constructive feedback. People develop a stronger commitment to the team goal, and you start to see good progress towards it.

There is often a prolonged overlap between storming and norming, because, as new tasks come up, the team may lapse back into behaviour from the storming stage.

**4. Stage = performing**

The team reaches the performing stage, when hard work leads, without friction, to the achievement of the team's goal. The structures and processes that you have set up support this well. As leader, you can delegate much of your work, and you can concentrate on developing team members.

It feels easy to be part of the team at this stage, and people who join or leave won't disrupt performance.

We would also like to add the final phase, called 'celebrating'. This is fundamental phase that helps people as they have reached their goal and they must not forget the joy of doing it. For example the applause at the end can have an added value and has the effect of rewarding the team member for a good work that has been done.

**Place for your own notes on chapter 3. Facilitator as a manager:**

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Brainstorm:  
How can you as a facilitator use  
your qualities in all stages named?

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## 4. FACILITATOR AS A DESIGNER AND PLANNER

### 4.1 TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS

The facilitator should always know what kind of group of people is he/ she working with. Therefore target group analysis is always needed before you plan to do any activity with the group.

Keep in mind:

Questions for target group analysis could be posed as followed:

- What is the age of the target group?
- What are their interests and their fears?
- What are the cultural backgrounds of the group?
- What is the most suitable way of learning (learning style) for your target?
- What could be the challenge for your target to work in a group? What would be the most suitable working solution for your target?
- Would your target easily face challenges in an intercultural environment? If yes which one?
- What challenges could your target face in the creation of the group (during forming, storming, norming, preforming)?
- What kind of conflict could interfere with the experience of your target?
- How would you deal with it?
- What methodology do you think is more suitable for your target?
- Etc.

### 4.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF DEBRIEFING, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

In the field of non-formal education, the debriefing is a semi-structured process by which the facilitator, once a certain activity is accomplished, makes a series of progressive questions in this session, with an adequate sequence that let the participants reflect what happened, giving important insights with the aim of that project towards the future, linking the challenge with the actions and the future (Pasat and others 2017).

Evaluation can be defined as rating of what went well, where is place for improvement, what was innovative in a certain activity or in a project. The main idea behind evaluation is to help make Interchange better or to prevent repetition of problems in future Interchange matches.

Reflection involves thinking about how things happened and what leaders and participants learned.

The reflection is connected to multiple activities and it's usually divided in small consequential steps that bring a bigger picture to the personal and group learning process. With good reflection, one can assess his/ her learning process and be aware of it in the next situation.

Keep in mind:

- On Salto Youth portal you can find many tools on how to follow your debriefing, evaluation and reflection
- You can also use a Kahoot! - a fun and very user friendly quiz-making app



### 4.3. COMPETENCES AS KEY OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

When we talk about self-assessment of what we have learned, there is much to think about. That's why it is easier to have some sort of tool to guide us through the learning process. Very useful tool is Youthpass, a recognition tool for non-formal & informal learning in youth projects, which includes 8 categories of Key competences. The Key Competences are:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue
- 2) Communication in foreign languages
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- 4) Digital competence
- 5) Learning to learn
- 6) Social and civic competences
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression

However, you are also invited to use Nefiks system of competences and make your self-assessment much easier.

**Place for your own notes on chapter 4. Facilitator as a designer and planner:**

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## 5. FACILITATOR AS A ... FACILITATOR!

So, here we are! Where this booklet ends, your role as a facilitator starts.

We wish you good luck and never stop believing in yourself. As a facilitator, you really do have a possibility to aspire young people - hopefully around the globe.

**Place for your own notes about you as a facilitator:**

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What am I good at?

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What do I still need to improve?

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Dilemmas and open questions that I would like to discuss with a mentor, other trainer, a friend, a youth worker etc.:

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Useful links to search for methodology of non-formal education and other activities:

- Salto Youth
- Youthpass

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